



## 17. OUTDOOR RECREATION

*“Quality of Life bears directly upon the fighting capability of our armed forces. It always has, and it always will.”<sup>20</sup>*

According to the *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan*, outdoor recreation is the second highest reason why people live in Alaska, and 71% of Alaskans believe that good hunting and fishing are important.

Fort Wainwright is a large, relatively undeveloped open space. This open space and the outdoor recreation opportunities associated with it are perhaps Fort Wainwright’s best attributes in terms of community quality of life. With ever-increasing time to pursue recreational interests, the general public will

undoubtedly place more demand on Fort Wainwright’s natural resources.

The *YTA Resource Management Plan* (BLM and U.S. Army, 1994) requires that a Recreational Activity Management Plan be developed to provide recreational opportunities compatible with military needs. This chapter deals primarily with those recreation programs directly related to natural resources management. Section 9-9b includes a description of outdoor recreation programs on Fort Wainwright that are not within the natural resources program.

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## 17-1 Objectives

### Military Readiness

- ▶ Manage outdoor recreation consistent with needs of the Fort Wainwright military mission

### Stewardship

- ▶ Monitor and manage soils, water, vegetation, and wildlife at Fort Wainwright with a consideration for all biological communities and human values associated with these resources
- ▶ Provide human-valued products of renewable natural resources when such products can be produced in a sustainable fashion without significant negative impacts on the military training mission
- ▶ Involve the surrounding community in Fort Wainwright's natural resources program
- ▶ Manage outdoor recreation while maintaining ecosystem integrity and function
- ▶ Control the use of off-road vehicles in terms of damage to ecosystem functionality

### Quality of Life

- ▶ Provide high quality opportunities to the Fort Wainwright community and the general public for hunting, trapping, and fishing within biological and recreational carrying capacities of the resources
- ▶ Provide high quality natural resources-based opportunities for other outdoor recreation, such as hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, rafting, birding, etc.

### Compliance

- ▶ Manage natural resources within the spirit and letter of environmental laws, particularly the Sikes Act upon which this INRMP is predicated
- ▶ Implement this INRMP within the framework of Army policies and regulations

## 17-2 Outdoor Recreation Management

### 17-2a Outdoor Recreation Management Plan

*Project Description.* Prepare, update, and implement an outdoor recreation management plan for Fort Wainwright.

*Project Justification.* Military and public demand for outdoor recreation on Army posts in Alaska is high. The management of outdoor recreation is consistent with ecosystem management principles and is required by the Sikes Act and AR 200-3.

*Project Prescription.* The outdoor recreation management plan will be developed by 1999. It will include an analysis of the harvest data collection system (Section 12-3a(1)) and management of the hunting, trapping, and fishing program (Section 17-2b(3)).

### 17-2b Manage Recreational Use and Impacts

*Project Description.* Manage recreational use on Fort Wainwright.

*Project Justification.* Recreational use, both legal and illegal, impacts the ecosystem and military training lands. If recreational use is not managed, conflicts will continue to occur, and recreational use may be limited by USARAK. Management of recreational use is a requirement of AR 200-3 and the Sikes Act.

*Project Prescription.* Below are specific programs to provide high quality recreation opportunities on Fort Wainwright, consistent with military missions. Programs below are directly related to natural resources management.

#### 17-2b(1) Access Policies

*Description.* Implement access policies for outdoor recreation on Fort Wainwright that are consistent

with Department of Defense policies, needs of the USARAK military mission, and the provision for high quality recreation.

The military mission has priority over outdoor recreation for range access. If hunting and fishing (or other outdoor recreational activities) are to continue on Fort Wainwright, the military mission must not be compromised. If recreational or management activities conflict with military activities, the military mission comes first.

Public accessibility to Fort Wainwright is a tradition. There are many opportunities for the general public to participate in activities on the installation. The fact that ADF&G's Management Area for fishing and Game Management Unit 20 for hunting and trapping each overlap part of the installation, contributes to its openness. Little of the installation's boundary is fenced. In maintaining a policy of public access, USARAK relies on a responsible public to adhere to restrictions placed on range access by Range Control.

DOD Directive 4715.3, *Environmental Conservation Program*, May 3, 1996, states, "*Those (DOD) lands shall be made available to the public for educational or recreational use of natural and cultural resources when such access is compatible with military mission activities, ecosystem sustainability, and with other considerations such as security, safety, and fiscal soundness. Opportunities for such access shall be equitably and impartially allocated.*"

Paragraph 2-10 of Army Regulation 200-3, *Natural Resources — Land, Forest, and Wildlife Management*, states that access by recreational users, "...will be within manageable quotas, subject to safety, military security, threatened or endangered species restrictions, and the capability of the natural resources to support such use; and at such times as such access can be granted without bona fide impairment of the military mission, as determined by the installation commander." This regulation further states that denying public access must be substantiated in the INRMP.

**Methods.** Hunting, trapping, and fishing programs on Fort Wainwright will remain open to the military's personnel, dependents, civilian employees, as well as members of the public who have a current Alaska hunting, trapping, or fishing license. Individuals

need only obtain a post hunting, trapping, and fishing permit. There are no restrictions on number of permits issued to the public.

The Fairbanks Borough has a Waterfront Commission that is trying to enhance recreational use of the Chena River. This may involve Fort Wainwright's lands and access to the river. USARAK will support this Commission's efforts, consistent with the needs of the military mission.

Hunter access into the Alpha Impact Area is a significant concern. This area has excellent hunting and good fishing opportunities, but most of it is closed due to unexploded ordnance with its safety and liability concerns. However, there is often illegal access into this area for these activities. ADF&G feels portions of the impact area may be suitable for limited public use, and the Army should evaluate the area for such access (Bruce Dale, personal communication). ADF&G also believes enforcement should be strictly controlled in areas that are off-limits.

USARAK intends to continue access policies specific to YTA, as outlined in the *YTA Resource Management Plan* (BLM and U.S. Army, 1994):

- ▶ The public may enter the post after gaining permission from Fort Wainwright. The public is expected to comply with all rules concerning restricted access and permanently and temporarily closed portions of the withdrawal.
- ▶ The public may use unimproved remote landing areas after complying with notification requirements, provided this use does not interfere with military activities or incur federal liabilities.
- ▶ Signs will be posted to warn the public of impact area and other closed areas.
- ▶ Stuart Creek Impact Area and the AFTAC site are closed to ORV use. ORVs over 1,500 pounds are limited to listed roads in YTA. ORVs under 1,500 pounds are limited to listed roads and trails during summer, but they may travel off-road when there is sufficient snow cover to prevent disturbance to vegetation.

USARAK's policies toward public access are within both the spirit and letter of Army and Department of Defense policies. They will be continued throughout 1998-2002.

### 17-2b(2) Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Use

**Description.** Manage ORV use on Fort Wainwright consistent with protection of natural resources, the needs of the military mission, and to provide high quality outdoor recreational opportunities. ORVs have potential for damage to natural resources. Army policy on ORVs is very restrictive (AR 200-3). ORV activity creates at least four significantly negative impacts:

- ▶ Those who trespass are exposed to dangers associated with unexploded ordnance and ongoing shelling and firing. Risk increases as people enter impact areas.
- ▶ Illegal ORV use interferes with ongoing military activities. The sighting of an ORV can disrupt military training to varying degrees depending upon the location of the sighting. In some cases it disrupts hundreds of troops in the field, and on small arms ranges, it can be just as dangerous as accessing an impact area. The illegal ORV operator often has no idea if, when, or where ranges are being used.
- ▶ The most critical factor to natural resources management and protection is damage caused to soils, vegetation, and streams (fish and riparian habitats). This may seem insignificant compared to the more obvious damage done by military maneuvers, but effects are cumulative. ORVs of all kinds make use of places that are relatively unaffected by military vehicles. Their impact on wet and boggy areas and more rugged and steep terrain can be significant. These areas, particularly subalpine and alpine areas, are important to the overall Alaskan ecosystem.
- ▶ Illegal use of ORVs on Fort Wainwright affords easy access for other illegal activities (including theft, fish and wildlife violations, etc.). Thus, ORV use is often combined with more serious activities.

Airboat operation in TFTA is controversial. In 1988, the Army, concerned over damage by airboats in TFTA, restricted airboats to main river and stream

channels in 6th Infantry Division Regulation 420-6, *Management of Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing on Army Lands in Alaska*. The Interior Alaska Airboat Association retained counsel, and requested reconsideration of restrictions, based on discrimination against airboat operators<sup>21</sup>. The Commander, after additional involvement on the part of individuals within the Airboat Association and the Alaska Congressional Delegation, rescinded restrictions on airboats, pending review of environmental considerations and recreational use.

A study on environmental impacts of airboats on TFTA was conducted by CRREL (Racine, et al., 1990). Airboats were found to damage floating vegetation and affect trumpeter swan distribution. The study recommended the development of an Off-Road-Vehicle Management Plan for Tanana Flats. This study has not been done.

A 1991 memorandum<sup>22</sup> summarized the issue. This action memorandum recommended: limiting airboats to the primary use area established before 1985, preparing an environmental assessment on the use of ORVs on Tanana Flats, making a decision on the use of airboats on TFTA, preparing an ORV Management Plan if airboats are allowed, and enforcing the decision.

Initial studies in 1989, showed that airboats increase water flow in Tanana Flats by opening waterways, but that this was probably not significant. Beaver damming activity helps offset this increased water flow (Racine, et al., 1990). Since then, airboat traffic has increased, and the significance of airboats opening waterways may have increased as well. Airboats damage or destroy beaver dams. There also is concern about effects of airboat traffic on waterfowl distribution.

ADF&G is concerned about airboats, including effects on wetland hydrology and game harvest by hunters. In 1996, the area west of Wood River was closed to airboats by ADF&G. This action will increase the demand by airboat users for use of TFTA.

**Methods.** USARAK Regulation 190-13 (Enclosure E-2) addresses areas opened and closed to ORV use

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<sup>21</sup> Letters: January 7, 1987; March 2, 1988, to Chief of Staff, Headquarters, 6th Infantry Division (Light), Fort Richardson from Cameron Kirk, Law Offices of John F. Rosie, Fairbanks.

<sup>22</sup> Memorandum: 19 Feb 1991, *Command Position Regarding Airboat Activities on the Tanana Flats Portion of Fort Wainwright*, to Commanding General from COL Edwin R. Ruff, Director of Engineering and Housing.

on Fort Wainwright. Use of privately owned ORVs on Fort Wainwright is allowed on a limited basis. ORVs vehicles must remain on designated trails and roads. The *YTA Resource Management Plan* (BLM and U.S. Army, 1994) forbids ORVs, without permission of Alyeska Pipeline Service, along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline System work pad used for maintenance along its line.

ORVs which use Fort Wainwright are primarily snowmachines and airboats, but also include dirt bikes, three and four-wheelers, and four-wheel drive vehicles. ORVs are authorized for use in the Main Post operational zone that begins at the north end of River Road Bridge, north along the southern limits of the Ammunition Supply Point restricted area, to the Fort Wainwright boundary. The Chena River borders this zone on the south. YTA is open to ORV use year-round except for closed areas. TFTA is closed to ORV use during summer except during hunting season per USARAK Regulation 420-6. However, the hunting season is not defined, and since black bear season is open year-round, this regulation is not restrictive.

USARAK will continue to study the effects of airboats on wetland hydrology and other factors that may be involved. If needed, USARAK will propose to protect wetlands as well as allow outdoor recreation. Public involvement, probably through the NEPA process, will be used if changes are proposed.

Fort Wainwright has no snowmachine family use area. The Natural Resources Branch will work with the Outdoor Recreation Branch to develop such an area over the next five years. One option to create trails would be to use AFS hotshots to cut the trail.

#### **17-2b(3) Manage Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing**

**Description.** Manage hunting, trapping, and fishing on Fort Wainwright. Military installations often have complex hunter and angler control systems.

These are needed to accommodate recreational activities without interference with the military mission and to ensure safe recreational experiences. The Sikes Act and AR 200-3 require management of hunting, trapping, and fishing. Without proper controls, it is impossible to sustain these activities on a long-term basis, and control is required to avoid conflicts with the fulfillment of the military mission.

**Methods. Permits and Harvest Reports:** Civilians and military personnel who desire to hunt, fish, or trap on Fort Wainwright or Eielson AFB lands are required to attend a safety briefing and obtain a hunting, fishing, and trapping permit. Permits are free of charge and cover one year. The Fort Wainwright Provost Marshall's Office, the Eielson AFB Natural Resources Office, and Eielson Unit Natural Resources Conservation Agents issue permits.

Hunters are instructed to submit the Fort Wainwright Hunting Harvest Record (USARAK Form 264a) by 31 December. Trappers must register their trap lines with the Fish and Wildlife Protection Section, Fort Wainwright. Trappers are given USARAK Form 266a (Seasonal Trapping Harvest Record), which must be completed and returned no later than 31 May of the current trapping season.

Fort Wainwright and Eielson Natural Resources offices encourage permittees to submit reports by posting notices in the local media and by mailing blank forms to permittees. Fort Wainwright revokes hunting and trapping privileges of permittees who fail to submit reports. Eielson AFB notifies First Sergeants of unit personnel who have not submitted reports near the end of the year. All permittees who fail to submit a report have their hunting and fishing privileges revoked (Von Rueden and Bruce, 1994).

During 1991-1994, Fort Wainwright issued 1,977, 1,352, 1,376, and 1,206 hunting permits, respec-

Table 17-2b(3). Percentage of Returned Required Harvest Reports.  
(Von Rueden and Bruce, 1994; Von Rueden and Kerns, 1991, 1992, 1993)

Harvest Report Compliance				
	1991	1992	1993	1994
Fort Wainwright	5%	29%	55%	65%
Eielson AFB	86%	89%	94%	93%

tively. During the same period, Eielson AFB issued 1,113, 979, 933, and 948 permits, respectively. Increased effort to ensure return of harvest reports at Fort Wainwright significantly increased the percentage returned during the 1991-1994 period. The return rate remained consistently high at Eielson AFB (Von Rueden and Kerns, 1991, 1992, 1993; Von Rueden and Bruce, 1994).

**Hunting, Trapping, and Fishing Regulations:** ADF&G issues various regulations (trapping, migratory bird hunting, sport fish, and hunting) for hunters, anglers, and trappers in Alaska. Army Regulation 200-3, *Natural Resources - Land Forest and Wildlife Management*, and USARAK Regulation 190-13, *Enforcement of Hunting, Trapping and Fishing on Army Lands in Alaska*, are primary means of establishing controls on hunting, trapping, and fishing as well as other natural resources-related activities on Fort Wainwright. USARAK Reg 190-13 is the regulation used by hunters, trappers, and anglers, and is updated regularly. Appendix C of the regulation provides information relating to the use of weapons, closed areas, and hunting, fishing, and trapping regulations specific to Fort Wainwright.

**Permit Fees:** In order to participate in hunting, fishing, or trapping on Fort Wainwright, individuals must obtain a post permit. Permits are now free.

Almost all military installations issue permits for hunting, fishing, and trapping and charge a fee for those permits. Funds collected are used for fish and wildlife projects. At Fort Wainwright, the establishment of a system to collect the fees is the biggest obstacle to implementing a fee system. The concept of establishing a permit fee system for hunting, fishing, and trapping on the installation will be investigated and perhaps implemented during 1998-2002.

**Check-in and Clearing Procedures:** Appendix C in USARAK Regulation 190-13 outlines specific requirements for hunters, anglers, and trappers to check-in/out of Fort Wainwright. Hunters must sign in personally or by telephone with the MP desk before entering Fort Wainwright-controlled lands. However, hunters may also sign in at Eielson AFB Security Police if hunting on YTA or TFTA. Hunters must sign out (in person or by telephone) at the

end of the day. There are no check-in or clearing regulations for anglers or trappers.

**State License Sales:** Persons are responsible for obtaining state hunting, fishing, or trapping licenses before obtaining their installation permits. The PMO does not sell state licenses.

Military personnel stationed in Alaska do not need state hunting licenses or big game harvest tags to hunt big game on military land. However, they must have appropriate harvest tickets which are free. Species-specific cards, provided by ADF&G, must have the date punched out prior to moving the carcass. Harvest tickets must be mailed to ADF&G.

Nonresident military personnel (who have lived in Alaska for less than 12 months) must comply with guide requirements when hunting Dall sheep, grizzly bears, or mountain goats on military lands (and elsewhere). Military dependents must have state hunting licenses and big game harvest tags to hunt big game. Military personnel and their dependents must have small game hunting licenses to hunt small game, on or off-post, and if they hunt waterfowl, they must also have both state and federal duck stamps<sup>23</sup>.

Fort Wainwright is part of the ADF&G Fairbanks Management Area for fisheries. Fort Wainwright fishing passes are currently free, but anglers are required to carry them. A state sport fishing license is required of all persons 16 years of age and older. Special provisions exist for military personnel on active duty stationed in Alaska, which make the cost of fishing licenses equivalent to those of Alaska residents. Fishing regulations can be found in the ADF&G annual Sport Fishing Regulations booklet that includes the Tanana River Drainage.

**Hunting/Fishing Maps:** Fort Wainwright maps are essential for hunter and angler use of range areas. Maps are included in USARAK Regulation 190-13. These maps show closed areas, special hunting areas, fishable lakes and waterways, and trapping areas.

By 1998, USARAK will use the ITAM GIS system to produce better maps for hunters, anglers, and trap-

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<sup>23</sup> Hunting on Military Land, ADF&G Hunter Information Series #111-6.

pers. Maps will be specifically designed for their intended use.

**Safety Considerations:** The MP Office, through the Fish and Wildlife Protection Section, gives each person who obtains an installation hunting, fishing, and trapping permit a Fort Wainwright/Eielson AFB briefing to explain regulations, laws, safety, and other special considerations when hunting, fishing, or trapping on the installations. Classes are scheduled throughout the year during duty and nonduty hours. All hunters, anglers, and trappers must sign a Safety Permit Liability Release (USARAK Form 440a).

**Evaluation:** As stated in Section 12-3a(1), USARAK will evaluate its hunting, trapping, and fishing management system to include the collection of harvest data. This evaluation will be accomplished in 1999 in conjunction with its enhanced Outdoor Recreation Plan (Section 17-2a).

#### *17-2b(4) Enhance Fishing Opportunities*

**Description.** Improve access to popular or potential fishing areas on Fort Wainwright. The number of fishing sites on Fort Wainwright is limited. It is important to maintain access to these sites during fishing seasons.

**Methods.** Other projects within this INRMP indirectly support this project, including Section 14-3a(6), *Stream and Lake Habitat Improvement*; Section 14-5b(1), *Manchu Lake Erosion*; Section 14-5b(2), *Erosion Along Chena River*; Section 14-5c(5), *Manchu Lake Training Site*; and potentially, Section 14-5c(16), *Blair Lakes Winter Trail Pilot Project*. In addition, access to River Road Pond (formerly Sage Hill Pond) and the trail from Transmitter Road to Horseshoe Lake in YTA will be improved in 1998-2002. A road sign will be placed on the road to Horseshoe Lake; the lake front area will be seeded and a picnic table and trash barrel installed.

#### *17-2b(5) Adopt a Fishing Hole Program*

**Description.** Establish and maintain an "adopt a fishing hole" program. Fishing and other recreation at streams, ponds, and lakes often result in a need for general cleanup and grounds maintenance. These recurring needs must be addressed to prevent long-term impacts and to continue quality recreation conditions.

**Methods.** Lakes, ponds, and rivers require cleanup and access maintenance on a recurring basis. Military units could complete this work to improve Fort Wainwright fishing conditions, develop conservation attitudes, and improve fisheries habitats. This program would be an offshoot of the post cleanup program and would be consistent with other military unit adoption programs, both on Fort Wainwright and at other military installations.

#### *17-2b(6) Kids' Fishing Derby*

**Description.** Host a kids' fishing derby. Fishing derbies are an excellent way to develop outdoor skills and ethics, and conservation attitudes in youngsters, as evidenced by the number of state fisheries education programs that sponsor these derbies across the United States. The Sikes Act and AR 200-3 specifically require management of outdoor recreation.

**Methods.** USARAK implemented the first kids' fishing derby at Weigh Station ponds during the summer 1998. ADF&G stocked the ponds, and the 1998 derby was sponsored by the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program. Experience with this derby will be used to develop future fishing derbies. It is anticipated that the derby will be moved to Monterey Lake in 1999.

#### *17-2b(7) Other Recreational Opportunities*

**Description.** Provide other outdoor recreational opportunities on Fort Wainwright, consistent with the provision of high quality recreation, supporting military mission needs, and protection of natural resources. Military and public demand for outdoor recreation on Army posts in Alaska is high. The management of outdoor recreation is consistent with ecosystem management principles and is required by the Sikes Act and AR 200-3.

**Methods.** There are many aspects of outdoor recreation not addressed above. Most of these are further described in Section 9-8b and are the responsibility of the Outdoor Recreation Branch. Specific management plans for these programs are not within the scope of this INRMP, except for general provisions to protect natural resources from damage. The project to monitor the impact of outdoor recreation on Fort Wainwright (Section 12-3f) will ensure that these recreation activities do not significantly impact ecosystem functionality.

